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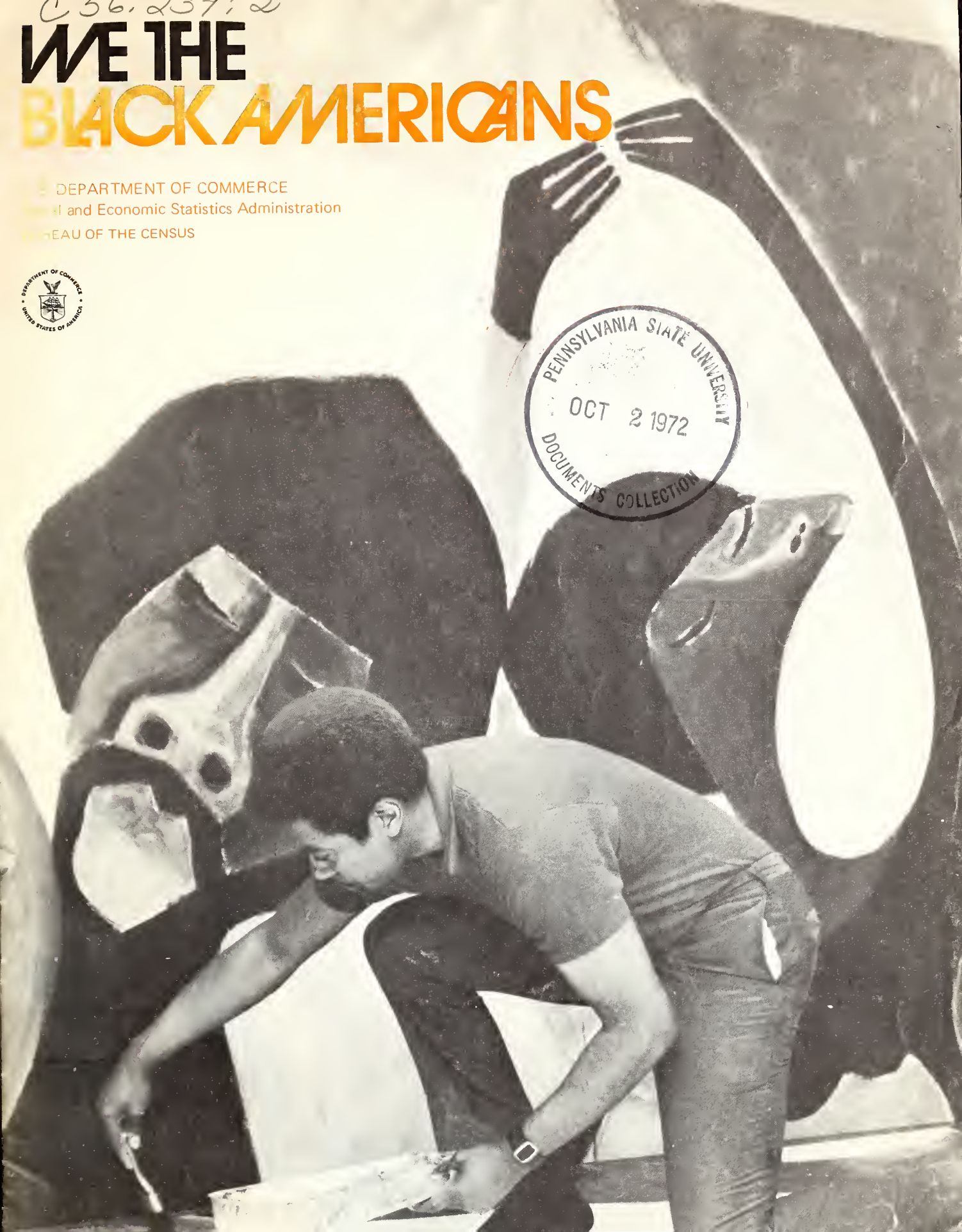
WE THE BLACK AMERICANS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
and Economic Statistics Administration
EAU OF THE CENSUS



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WE THE BLACK AMERICANS

On April 1, 1970, census takers counted us, just as they have done every decade since 1790. They found that there are 22,580,289 of us—more people than the entire population of Canada.

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NO. 2 IN A SERIES OF REPORTS FROM THE 1970 CENSUS

WE THE BLACK AMERICANS

In the decade of the 1960's, the decennial census showed:

We're going to school in greater numbers and staying in school longer. Fifty-four percent of young black men and 58 percent of young black women had finished high school in 1970. Ten years earlier the figures were 36 and 41 percent, respectively.

We're holding better jobs. Our number of better paying jobs increased by 72 percent between 1960 and 1970.

We're earning more. About one-fourth of our 4.8 million families had annual incomes of $10,000 or more in 1970; in 1960 less than one-tenth earned this much.

We're homeowners. Forty-two percent of the 6.2 million homes blacks live in are owner-occupied.

And we're young. In 1970, the median age of black men and women was 21.0 and 23.6, respectively—about 7 years younger than whites.

THERE ARE MORE OF US

The total of 22.6 million black Americans in 1970 was 3.7 million more than were counted in the 1960 census. Altogether there are 10.8 million black males and 11.8 million black females. We were 11.1 percent of the total United States population on Census Day.

Early in the country's history, every fifth person was black—about 760,000. That was in 1790, when the first census was taken. Just before the Civil War we numbered 4.5 million, mostly slaves. By 1900, the black population had nearly doubled, reaching 8.8 million.

Most of our growth in numbers has occurred in this century. Although it took us 110 years to reach 8.8 million, it required only 70 years to add 13.8 million more. This was a 157 percent rise from 1900. Some census projections indicate there may be 31 million black Americans by 1990.

We had a higher birth rate than whites between 1960 and 1970, and it accounted for most of the 20-percent black population increase in this span. Fourteen percent of all American children under the age of 18 are black.

TOTAL AND BLACK POPULATION, 1900-1970

(Numbers in millions)

Year	Total	Black	Percent Black
1900	76.2	8.8	12
1910	92.2	9.8	11
1920	106.0	10.5	10
1930	123.2	11.9	10
1940	132.2	12.9	10
1950	151.3	15.0	10
1960	179.3	18.9	11
1970	203.2	22.6	11

Our percentage of the total population began to decline in the late 19th century. One major reason: the Industrial Revolution inspired vast numbers of white Europeans to come to America, while Africans were not entering this country in large numbers.

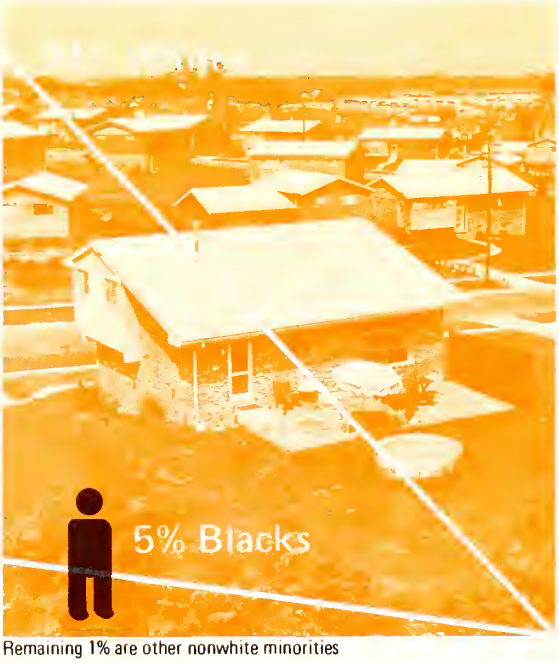
WE'RE 'BIG-CITY' PEOPLE . . .

The 1970 census merely confirmed what most of us have known for a long time. Black Americans are "big-city" people.

It wasn't always that way. During the period of slavery and for many years after it ended, nearly all of us were down on the farm, mostly in the South. Eventually, lagging farm work and tales of "streets paved with gold" up North changed all this, and many of us moved on. Now, except in the South, more than 90 percent of us live in metropolitan areas.

WE THE BLACK AMERICANS

OUR SUBURBAN POPULATION



Remaining 1% are other nonwhite minorities

Almost 28 percent of the total population of the 12 largest (2 million or more people) metropolitan areas is black. In fact, black population growth since 1960 has been almost all in the central cities of metropolitan areas, accounting for 3.3 million of the 3.7 million increase. The trend is not likely to be reversed in the near future.

When the 1970 census was taken, 4 of every 10 blacks were concentrated in just 30 cities. There were 16 cities with black populations of 50 percent or more, compared to only 3 in 1960. We make up more than half the populations of four large cities—Washington, D.C., Newark, N.J., Atlanta, Ga., and Gary, Ind.

Our trek to the big cities from rural areas has been more than matched by the movement of whites to the suburbs. Hence, the cities are becoming increasingly black while the suburbs are mostly white.

In all, we make up only 5 percent of the suburban population, and we showed only a slight increase in numbers there between 1960 and 1970. The trend of business and industry toward relocating in suburban areas could change some of this.

30 CITIES RANKED BY BLACK POPULATION

City	Black Population 1970	1970 National Rank		Black Population Percentage	
		Black	Total	1970	1960
New York	1,668,115	1	1	21.2%	14%
Chicago	1,102,620	2	2	32.7	23
Detroit	660,428	3	5	43.7	29
Philadelphia	653,791	4	4	33.6	26
Washington, D.C.	537,712	5	9	71.1	54
Los Angeles	503,606	6	3	17.9	14
Baltimore	420,210	7	7	46.4	35
Houston	316,551	8	6	25.7	23
Cleveland	287,841	9	10	38.3	29
New Orleans	267,308	10	19	45.0	37
Atlanta	255,051	11	27	51.3	38
St. Louis	254,191	12	18	40.9	29
Memphis	242,513	13	17	38.9	37
Dallas	210,238	14	8	24.9	19
Newark	207,458	15	36	54.2	34
Indianapolis	134,320	16	11	18.0	21
Birmingham	126,388	17	48	42.0	40
Cincinnati	125,070	18	29	27.6	22
Oakland	124,710	19	38	34.5	23
Jacksonville	118,158	20	23	22.3	41
Kansas City, Mo.	112,005	21	26	22.1	18
Milwaukee	105,088	22	12	14.7	8
Pittsburgh	104,904	23	24	20.2	17
Richmond	104,766	24	57	42.0	42
Boston	104,707	25	16	16.3	9
Columbus, Ohio	99,627	26	21	18.5	16
San Francisco	96,078	27	13	13.4	10
Buffalo	94,329	28	28	20.4	13
Gary	92,695	29	75	52.8	39
Nashville-Davidson, Tenn.	87,851	30	30	19.6	38

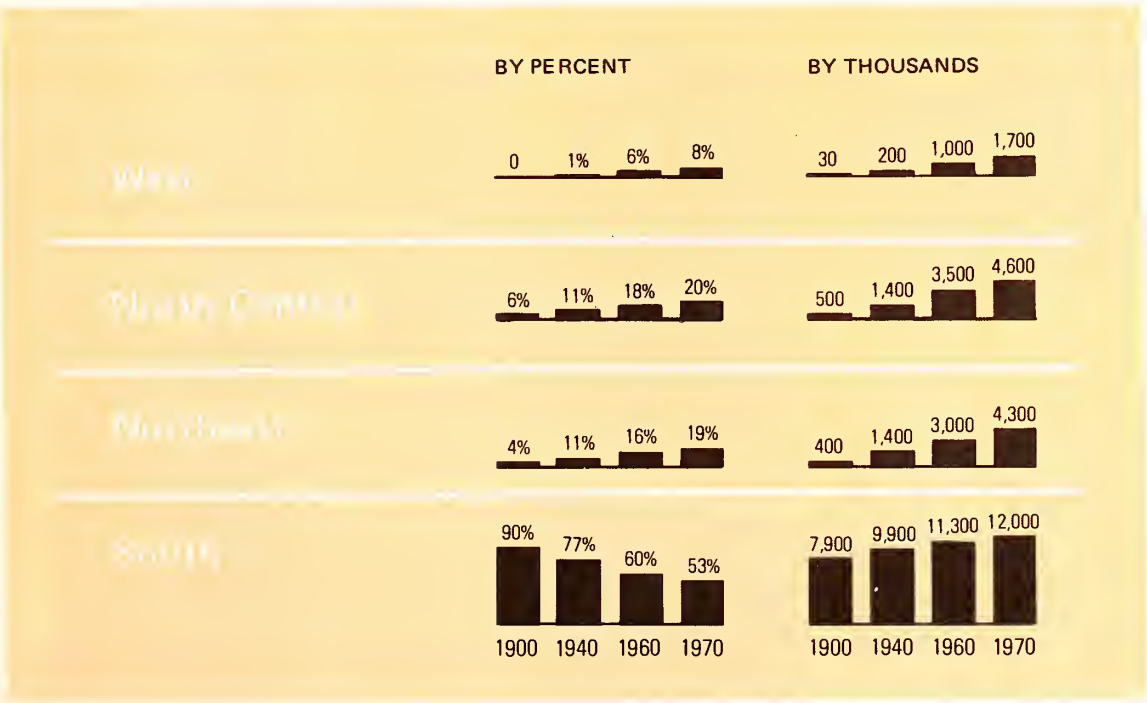
. . . AND WE'RE SPREADING OUT

Look at our movement from another direction. During the past 30 years, the percentage of blacks has been declining in the South and rising elsewhere.

There was a reason for this. During World War II, job-seeking blacks fanned out into the great industrial centers of Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and California, and a new generation—their sons and daughters—has started families in the North and West. This continued migration of blacks from the South accounts for much of our growth in these other regions since 1940.

About 1.5 million blacks left the South in each of the last three decades. Yet a high birth rate and declining deaths resulted in rising numbers of us living there. So, we're slightly less than 10 percent of the population in the North and West, but we are 19 percent of the South's population.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE BLACK POPULATION



WE THE BLACK AMERICANS

WHAT WE EARN . . .

The head of a black family earns 3.5 times as much as a generation ago. Income brought in by his wife and other family members also is likely to be greater. This is because more wives and other members of the family are working today than was the case in 1950.

As we entered the 1970's, nearly one-quarter of our families had annual incomes of $10,000 or more. In 1960, fewer than 10 percent were in this income class.

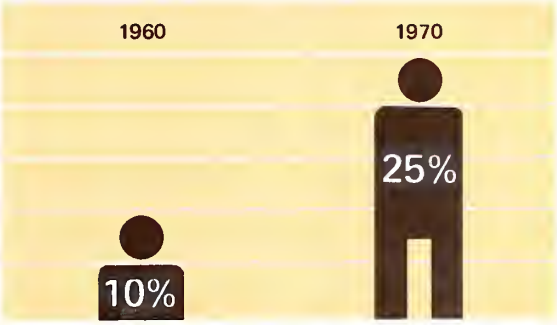
Although the income of black families was about 54 percent that of whites in 1964, it had risen to 61 percent by 1970. In other words, for every $100 a white family earned in 1970, a black family made $61.

Our incomes in the South were about 57 percent of that earned by whites in 1970, compared with 49 percent in 1965. Among the four regions, the gain was greatest for blacks in the South. Median income for us, in other parts of the country, was about three-fourths of what whites earned.

One reason our incomes are relatively less is that black families are nearly three times as likely to be headed by a woman as white families. Husband-wife families, regardless of race, tend to have incomes double those of families headed by women.

The earning power of black workers is lower than that of whites, even when they have the same amount of education and training.

BLACK FAMILY INCOME OF $10,000 OR MORE



Regions	Median Family Income in 1970		Black Income as a Percentage of White Income
	Black	White	
United States	$6,279	$10,236	61%
Northeast	7,774	10,939	71%
North Central	7,718	10,508	73%
South	5,226	9,240	57%
West	8,001	10,382	77%

WE THE BLACK AMERICANS

. . . AND HOW WE EARN IT

We're steadily moving away from jobs traditionally held by blacks and stepping into better paying positions. Lower paying jobs have been chiefly responsible for our lower income levels because about two of every five black men and half of all black women who work are service workers, laborers, or farm help. However, between 1960 and 1970, the number of us employed in the white-collar, craftsmen, and operative occupations increased by 72 percent, from 3 million to about 5 million. The increase for whites was 24 percent.

During the same decade, our total employment increased 22 percent and our employment in professional, technical, and clerical jobs doubled. We also made substantial gains as salesmen and managers. Gains were smaller in service jobs, and the number of us holding low-skill employment such as maids, laborers, and farm workers declined.

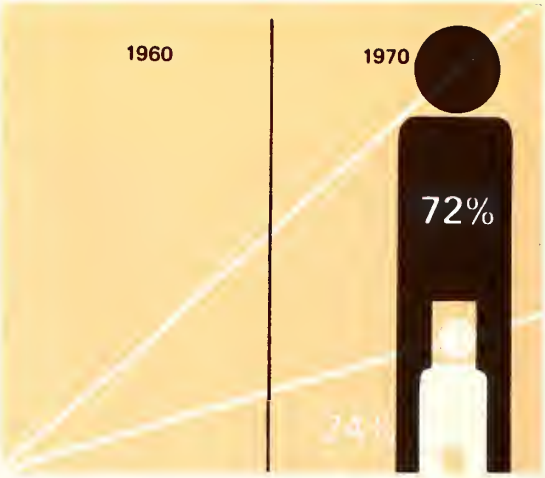
EMPLOYMENT INCREASE 1960-1970
BY OCCUPATION

	MALE		FEMALE	
	Black	White	Black	White
Professional, managerial, technical, clerical, sales workers.	22%	43%	36%	70%
Skilled blue-collar. (Carpenters, construction craftsmen, mechanics, factory workers, drivers, etc.)	60%	47%	19%.	16%

* Does not include the armed forces

However, black representation in the professions and some high-skill jobs is still small. Black men are 10 percent of the work force but only minor percentages of the totals among dentists, doctors, insurance brokers, plumbers, electricians, and engineers.

BLACKS MAKE 3 TO 1 GAIN IN
WHITE-COLLAR, SKILLED JOBS



The average black male works the full year, most likely for a private company as a craftsman, operative, laborer, or service worker. That is, his occupation is that of a carpenter, mechanic, assembler, truck or taxi driver, parking lot attendant, waiter, janitor, construction worker, or comparable "blue-collar" worker. In the 1940's, he was generally a farmer or a laborer.

A Census Bureau study in 1969 showed that black Americans owned and operated 163,000 businesses with a total gross income of $4.5 billion that year. These businesses were concentrated in the retail and service trades and ranged from small trucking firms and building contractors to eating places and funeral homes. About 250,000 of us are self-employed in a wide variety of fields.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment remains a continuing problem for blacks in America.

Our average rate of joblessness in 1971 stood at 9.9 percent of the work force. That was about double that of whites. It was higher in the central cities than in the suburbs. In 1971, about 32

percent of our teenagers were out of work. Our high school dropout rate, one in seven, accounts for part of it; also, employment is hard to come by for the very young of all races.

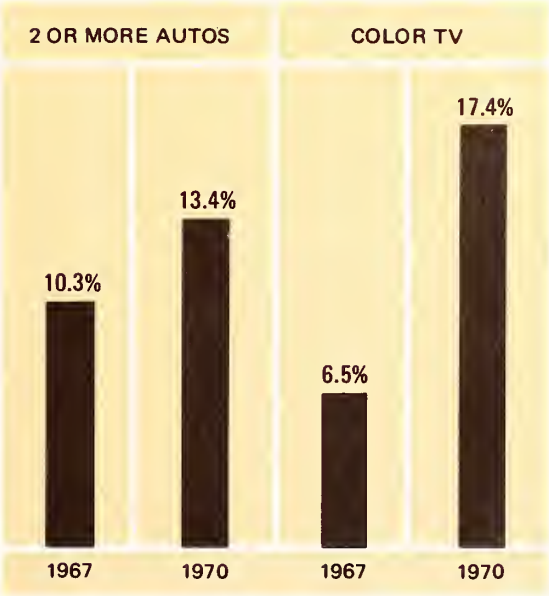
OUR LIFE STYLE IMPROVES . . .

In 1970, 42 percent of us lived in homes we either owned or were buying. This compared to 65 percent for whites. In 1960, 38 percent of us lived in our own homes. For both blacks and whites, homeowner rates are higher in suburban and rural areas than in central cities.

In the central city, where the typical black family lives, their quarters are more likely to be rented than owned. Dwelling units are also more likely to have complete plumbing—that is, hot and cold piped water, an indoor toilet, and a bath for the exclusive use of the individual households. Approximately 95 percent of all black-occupied units inside central cities had complete plumbing in 1970.

2 OUT OF 5 ARE HOME OWNERS

MORE AUTOS AND TV'S



Slightly more than 2 percent of us are buying second homes, and we're purchasing more and more "creature comforts" such as automobiles, television sets, and household appliances.

About 57 percent of our families have at least one car; 13 percent own two or more. Ninety-two percent of us own television sets, 12 percent have clothes dryers, and 3 percent have dishwashers.

. . . AND WE'RE BETTER EDUCATED

As the result of growing emphasis on education, black parents today have had about 4 years more schooling than the preceding generation. The average number of years of schooling in 1950 was 7; today it is about 11 years.

Today's children are doing even better. The number of blacks aged 16 and 17 attending high school has increased from 77 percent in 1960 to 86 percent in 1970.

Sixteen percent of our young people are attending college today. Six percent of us in the 25 to 34 years age group have graduated from a university. About 17 percent of all whites in this age group have completed college.

Of the 30 cities with the largest black population, the 1970 census shows that Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Houston, and Los Angeles had the highest proportions of blacks completing college.

MORE OF US ARE VOTING . . .

Forty-four percent of our voting age population cast ballots in the 1970 congressional elections, about the same as the 1966 tally.

Voter participation by blacks in the South increased somewhat between the 1966 and 1970 congressional elections. Despite these gains, a

smaller proportion of eligible blacks than whites voted in all regions of the country in both elections.

About 11.5 million blacks are of voting age. Sixty-one percent reported that they had registered to vote in 1970. In 1966, the percentage was about the same. White voter registration dropped about 3 percent during this period.

. . . AND HOLDING ELECTED OFFICES

The number of blacks elected to Congress increased considerably between 1960 and 1970—from 4 to 14. And, for the first time in the 20th century, two black members of the House of Representatives were elected from the South.

Between 1962 and 1970, our numbers serving in State legislatures increased from 52 to 198. Eighty-one mayors and 1,567 other elected officials were black. Most black elected officials, holding posts ranging from State offices to city and county boards of education, were in the South where 53 percent of us live.

OUR DEFENSE CONTRIBUTION

In 1970, about 293,000 blacks were serving in the Armed Forces, 10 percent of the total. Roughly the same percentage of us were serving overseas, mainly in Vietnam and West Germany.

We make up 10 percent of the Armed Forces; 2 percent of all officers are black. Eleven percent of all blacks in the armed services enlisted. Of the remainder, who were drafted, 14 percent of those blacks who were eligible reenlisted after their first tour of duty. The figure for whites was 9 percent.

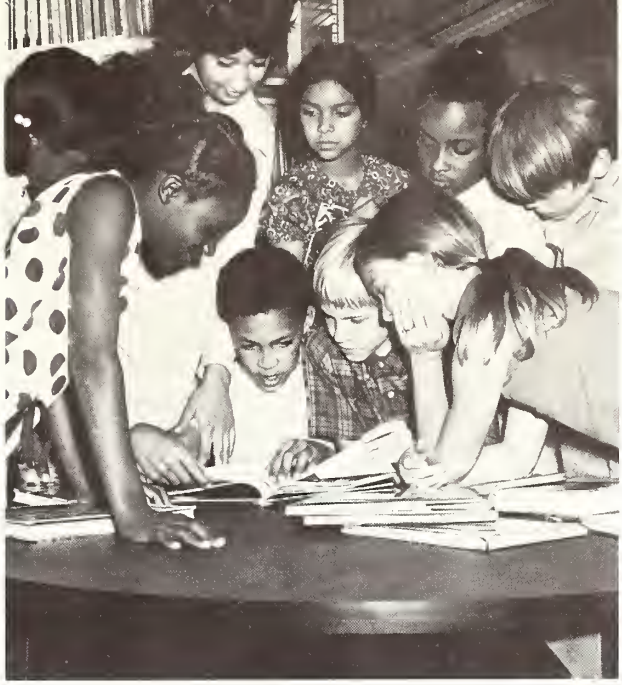
VOTER PARTICIPATION: 1970

	Black	White
Number of Voting Age	11,472,000	107,997,000
U.S. Total	44%	56%
North and West	51%	60%
South	37%	46%

TOTAL BLACKS REGISTERED TO VOTE

	1970	1960
U.S. Total	61%	60%
North and West	65%	69%
South	58%	53%

WE THE BLACK AMERICANS



INTO THE FUTURE

It's easy to see that the Census Bureau does a lot more than count noses and show us how we stack up statistically. Census information puts our progress and our problems in better context. Data obtained from the census are the bases for determining what we're entitled to in services and money for our communities and for determining our representation in government.

The 1970 census proves that black Americans have made big strides in closing gaps between the races. It also shows that, despite these gains, blacks remain behind whites in many social and economic categories—in education, in employment, in earnings, and in quality housing.

By 1990—less than 18 years from now—there may be about 31 million black Americans. That's 8 million more mouths to feed, clothe, house, and educate.

By 1980, the next decennial census year, the black labor force may increase by 4 million while the total labor force may skyrocket by 23 million. The Nation will need 4 additional jobs for every 10 held by us in 1965.

The Census Bureau shows the dimension of the problems. The solutions are in the hands of ALL Americans. We can contribute to them with our hearts, our minds, and our "SOUL."

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